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The Work of the Clergy

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The Work of the Clergy

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Religious Persecution in Mexico

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Merida, Yucatán, Mexico

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THE WORK OF THE CLERGY AND THE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN MEXICO.

Perhaps the principal argument employed by the reactionary party of Mexico before the government and in the press of the United States to attack and lower the prestige of the Constitutionalist Revolution, is the one which relates to the religious question.

Constitutionalism, especially since the rupture between the Convention party and Mr. Carranza—has been presented by its enemies before the American people, as an implacable and systematic persecutor of religion in all its forms and manifestations; as the vandalic destroyer of temples and images; as the insatiable and cruel executioner of timid and innocent priests; in one word, as an atheist and implanter and propagator of atheism in Mexico. They have even tried to demonstrate that this and several other dissolvent theories constitute the fundamental basis and the reason for existence of the constitutionalist policy, at least in that part which refers to the internal government of the Republic.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the infamous campaign carried on by the enemies of the Revolution must have impressed, and in fact has impressed, in a painful and profound manner, a nation so eminently religious as is the American people; a nation so zealous of freedom of thought and so respectful of another's beliefs; a nation where such freedom and such respect are considered, and justly so, as the most precious and glorious conquest of contemporaneous civilization and the most sacred property of human spirit.

The acknowledgment of this truth makes it imperative to expose in detail before the American people, the facts which constitute the religious persecution of which the Mexican reactionaries complain, and the role which the clergy has had and still seeks to have in the history of the country; because the struggle which Constitutionalism has waged and continues waging, is not and cannot be a struggle against religion in general and much less against the religious idea in abstract, an idea which is imminent in man; but it is a struggle exclusively against the clergy, against the *catholic* clergy in Mexico, since catholicism is, or attempts to be, almost to the exclusion of any other, the dominant religion in the Republic.

The people of the United States, protestant in its majority, and educated in a spirit of liberalism and democracy within that religion, cannot, without an exact and deep knowledge of the Mexican question, decide on it, and much less understand it. Our object is to furnish the American reader with the necessary data so that he become fully acquainted with the subject and judge it, not from the American point of view, from the point of view of a protestant, liberal, democratic, cultured, educated nation, a lover of freedom and of the free examination of things, but from the Mexican point of view; that is to say, from the point of view of a nation consisting of a small minority of wealthy individuals, fanatical, accustomed to despotism and tyranny, systematically opposed to all that aims to deprive it of its odious liberties and unjust privileges, a bitter enemy of all that spells freedom and education of the real people; and by a numberless majority of analphabet Indians, brought up in servitude, superstition and idolatry, slaves of routine and tradition, opposed to all innovation, on account of the inherent distrust and fear of subjugated races. Somber extremes among which sparkles as a bright sunbeam in a tempestuous sky, the so-called middle class, the only social element capable of strengthening the nation, of teaching and guiding it to progress. To this class belongs the intellectual and thinking class of Mexico, and this is the one which has produced, from the time of the viceroys, to date, the men who have been an honor to the country in the liberal political field, in literature, in sciences and arts, in the militia, in commerce and the industries. From it surged the illustrious men who undertook and carried out the tremendous work of independence and those who, for about a century, have continued struggling in an unequal fight, tenacious and terrible, with the aim of liberating the people from fanaticism and with the aim of democratizing it, helping it out of the abyss of oppression and ignorance where it has been kept by the clergy and the potentates, the so-called white aristocrats of Mexico, who still attempt to keep the people in subjugation. They are the elements which since the time of the emancipation are known in our national history under the fatidic name of *Reactionary Party*.

The territory which at present constitutes the Mexican Republic, was conquered and colonized about four centuries ago by the Spaniards of the times of Charles V and Philip II, that is to say, by the subjects of the most backward, absolutist and fanatical of all the monarchies which existed in Europe.

The Papate was at the height of its power at that time. The Roman Pontiff was considered as the king of kings and the unappallable and supreme authority in the world. The power of the Church was unlimited, and the Inquisi-

tion did not allow even a peep into the possibility of the day dawning in which the catholic nations might enjoy what is now called freedom of conscience. The friars and the priests were considered as envoys and representatives of the Divine Power, and as the only distributors of all spiritual grace and welfare. They, with the kings and the nobility, had part in the temporal power, and with them were the masters and absolute and indisputable owners of the masses, which were in a condition of stupor through the darkness of the Middle Ages. More than any other nation, the Spanish people adapted and moulded itself to the ideas of stupid fanaticism which it suited the royalty and the clergy to maintain, because the nefast influence of Rome was at work in spirits already accustomed to the fatalism which the domination of the Arabs had fostered in Spain.

This nation, fanatical and somber, despotic and frowning, accustomed to tradition and to religious and political tyranny, guided by audacious adventurers, sanguinary and filled with the lust of gold, and by lazy friars, ignorant and full of cupidity, was appointed by the hand of destiny to conquer and colonize America, at present unduly calling itself Latin, and to carry the light of European culture and Christianity to the Aztec people whose civilization, really advanced in many ways, was being wrecked on the breakers of the most ferocious despotism and the most ignoble idolatry.

This meant the assured failure of the Spanish work in America, as regards its political and sociological aspect which constitute the fundamental principles of all human organization, since History teaches that when the conqueror has the same capital defects that mark the conquered, these defects are added, while the good qualities characteristic of each, are deducted and slowly degenerate and finally disappear.

Closely united in ideas and interests, co-participants in public power in the colony, so much so that frequently bishops and arch-bishops were viceroys or governors of provinces, the conquerors and the clergy helped to establish what, to the shame of Spain and of mankind, is known in history under the name of *Spanish colonial system,* a system unique in the world, which consists simply in the division amongst the Spaniards, of the lands, mines and even persons of the Indians who were forced to work as beasts in the terrible "encomiendas" of the conquerors, to the exclusive benefit of the Crown and the Church.

The clergy, therefore, had a direct, personal interest in keeping the natives in a perpetual state of blind ignorance and absolute servitude, since these were essential conditions for the colonial domination.

The Spanish clergy not only did nothing to raise the intellectual and moral level of the Indian, about whom they had long and heated discussions as to his *being endowed* with a soul, a fact which many of them denied—but they made him sink deeper into the ignominious abyss into which he had been pushed.

The civilization work by means of the conquest, such as was understood and practised by the other people of Europe, did not exist in Spanish America. The disgusting absolutism of the aborigine monarchs and chieftains was replaced by the repugnant and brutal despotism of the Spanish government. The barbarous lords of the land, cruel, sanguinary, ferocious, gave way to conquerors and "encomenderos," no less ferocious, sanguinary and cruel. The Mexican priests were replaced by the Spanish friars, as fanatic as the former, and perhaps more ignorant. The monstrous Aztec paganism gave way to the fetichist Catholic polyteism. The Indian temples were destroyed in order to erect on their ruins other temples which often were built with the materials, still bloody, of the former. The idols of the natives were replaced by the foreign idols. The terrible Hitzilopochtli, the ferocious god of war of the Aztecs, merely was lowered from its rank, and became any Lord of Battles. The famous god of water was thereafter some vulgar St. Isidro, of Spanish manufacture, who has charge of irrigating the fields and protecting the crops. Each and every one of the Mexican gods was transformed into innumerable Christs, virgins and saints, disposed to grant the same favors under the same threats through the supplications of similar priests, but requiring richer offerings. If there was any difference, this consisted in the fact that, for the greater facility of the vile exploitation, instead of having one sanctuary for each god, almost all the gods were gathered in each temple. If any improvement was attempted, it was merely to replace the hard strong Mexican stone, difficult to cut and to chisel, by the easily handled paper and cotton goods, the clay and the pastes and the soft woods of the Spaniards. If any progress was made, it was to spread among the Indians the idea of the Catholic hell, the eternal suffering in punishing crimes committed on or by perishable beings, and the monstrous and blasphemous conception of the devil, that is to say, a spirit of eternal and infinite evil, created and tolerated by a God of infinite goodness and inexhaustible love, to tempt and cause the spiritual loss of man. It is true that they suppressed the bloody holocausts of the Indian divinitie, but it was merely to inaugurate their own persecutions, their own burnings, their atrocious torments and the horrible cells of the *Holy* Inquisition.

As to the social state, the low classes gained nothing, and lost much under the Spanish conquerors. The Indians status grew worse, for to personal slavery was added the political slavery of the whole race. The Indian had practically no home, and was considered as a domestic beast and not as an individual, being deprived even of that little personality which, according to natural principles, corresponds to man by the mere fact of existing. The Indian could not leave the "encomienda" where he belonged nor work at the labor he preferred or felt inclined to. He was not permitted to acquire instruction, even if he so desired, much less to learn an art, a profession or even a trade of those exercised by the Spaniards. He was forbidden to educate his children because these, and the wife he had taken, were merely the miserable companions of his hateful servitude.

Instruction, if we dare call it by this name, was entirely in the hands of the clergy, and as regards the Indian, he was taught the catechism, not Christian, but catholic, and this one in the native tongues, which missionaries and priests learned for that purpose; for the clergy had a particular care not to spread the Spanish language among the Indians in order to keep them more easily and securely in their condition of absolute ignorance, a system which had been continued until now, in several regions of the Republic. In Yucatan, for example, which is one of our richest states but also one of the most reactionary, the old colonial ways were religiously preserved and the frightful "encomiendas" of the old conquerors were maintained in fact until the establishment of the Constitutional government there. Out of a population of 300,000 more than half are pure Indians who are absolutely ignorant of the Spanish language and in regard to whom all effort for immediate civilization meets with immense difficulties. The natives speak a language which has become reduced to the minimum of words, absolutely lacking all literature and consisting only of the words most indispensable to carry on the business of the limited and mechanical life which they have carried on for four centuries, using only spoken words and employing interpreters, who were men often sold to reaction. These Indians, therefore, are unable to become acquainted with the liberating steps taken with regard to themselves, and it is an impossible task, until they learn to read, write and speak Spanish in which they are being instructed at present —to express to them in an exact and simple manner, with the corresponding explanations and advices, the knowledge of the law and their rights under it. Their language, however rich it may have been in ancient times, at present, due to degeneration and the slavery of the race, lacks all technical and scientific terms, and the dictions necessary

to translate modern ideas and even to represent the most usual things of our epoch.

The creoles and the few mestizos who obtained grace were taught to read and write in a very deficient way; generally, only the creoles were taught to write. Of these classes, the individuals who desired to follow a profession, could choose only that of arms or the Church. In the former, they were admitted as a special concession, while in the latter they had to endure the humiliations to which the high Spanish clergy submitted them, and which they, in their turn, inflicted on others.

The white woman was maintained in a condition of mediaeval restriction, in a state of ignorance and fanaticism which is still reflected in the modern Mexican woman. As a reminiscence of the Moorish customs implanted in Spain and maintained throughout seven centuries of Arab domination, the woman remained at home, guarded by the formidable iron gratings which still call the attention of the foreigner who visits Mexican cities, and her society was reduced to intercourse with her husband and her children, her immediate servants and naturally, her confessor and favorite friars. The Spanish saying: "the married woman, must be broken-legged and stay at home" contains a complete historical comment and paints a social condition; this proverb was pitilessly practiced, so that the home had no opening door except into the convent or the vestry. Similar to the Aztecs and the gentile of Greece and Rome, each family had its own house gods and in each house was a real temple more or less spacious according to the resources of the dwellers. The long idle hours of the woman and the children were consumed in the worship of a great variety of images, representing virgins and Christs and saints, and even the animals supposed to have been the companions of the latter. These images were placed on rich altars magnificently ornamented and constantly lighted by means of small oil lamps (another relic of paganism), which were considered sacred. This barbarous and anti-Christian custom was introduced and favored by the Church in order to affirm and maintain its domination; and we must acknowledge with shame that it is still prevalent in Mexico where it flourishes.

Thus the colony vegetated for almost three centuries, and during this time the labor and suffering of the Indians enriched the Crown, the Clergy and the upper class which was constituted of the Spaniards and the sons of Spaniards. Archbishops and bishops, canons, friars and monks of all known orders who participated, directly or indirectly in the government of the colony, were supported by public funds created by means of special taxes, and they exercised the highest offices in audiences, councils and

boards, having exclusive charge of the *moral and intellectual* direction of the whole country. Spaniards and creoles, mestizos and Indians, they all bowed to the friars and from the viceroy down, they all trembled with fright under the threat of excommunication and shuddered at the idea of being persecuted by the Inquisition. The weak and isolated efforts which almost always were made with interested ideas, both in Europe and in America to improve the condition of the natives, failed signally, and served only to provoke terrible reprisals on the part of the clergy. The few and inefficient dispositions which favored the Indians, and which were issued by some of the Spanish monarchs upon the recommendation of the celebrated "Council of Indies," invariably met with a firm opposition from the clergy, and even in the metropol itself gave rise to bitter intrigues wherefrom the Church always emerged triumphant and stronger than ever.

Thus the New Spain was surprised by the war of Independence in the United States and that bloody and glorious dawn of Liberty called the French Revolution. These two colossal events naturally had to produce a commotion in the Spanish colonies in America. The desire to become freed from the mother-country was favored by the state of debility to which the Napoleonic campaign had reduced Spain, and also on account of the internal strife which rent the Peninsula, and the tremendous administrative corruption which marked the fatal reign of the fanatical and imbecile Ferdinand VII.

In Mexico as well as in the other colonies, therefore, there started the long and bloody struggle for independence which, by a very particular coincidence, which later had a great influence in favor of the clergy, was headed by two unknown Mexican priests who belonged to the low clergy, so rebutted and mistreated by the high Spanish clergy.

As was to be expected, the latter opposed with all its strength and all its influence the accomplishment of emancipation; disowned and excommunicated the insurgent priests, and when they at last fell in the struggle, degraded them publicly and ignominiously, ordering prayers of thanks when the chiefs of the revolt were finally sent to the scaffold.

The war of independence which lasted eleven years, would have lasted many years more if the Spaniards and the Clergy itself had not finally understood that the cause of Spain in the New World was definitely lost; when they decided to take part in the revolt against the government of the metropoli and take advantage of the benefits they could derive by assuming such an attitude and carefully watching the trend of the new order of things.

This is how that transcendental work was accomplished.

Thus were realized the daring dreams of the immortal *Hidalgo* and the great *Morelos*. But we must acknowledge that the movement started in 1810 was more of a political uprise than a social revolution.

The essential object of the enterprise was the emancipation of the colony from the rule of the Spanish crown, as is sufficiently evidenced by the circumstances that at first it was not considered indispensable, to abolish the monarchical form or to put an end to the supremacy of the Spanish element. In the treaty of Cordoba which was celebrated to end the war and was expressly acknowledged in the Act of Independence, it was stipulated that Mexico would become an independent sovereign kingdom, and that its government would be placed in the hands of that same King Ferdinand VII; or if he did not accept or resigned, it would be left in the hands of his brother, the clerical and sanguinary Charles of Bourbon or any other of the infants of the same house.

The insurgents revolted neither against the influence nor privileges of the clergy; on the contrary, they supported that class in the most determined manner. Their glorious flag bore the image of the Indian virgin, the famous Virgin of Guadalupe. In 1813, the Congress of Chilpancingo had declared that "the Mexican nation would profess and recognize no other religion but the catholic one, and would never permit or tolerate the practice, public or *secret* of any other. Also that it would protect with all its energy the profession of faith, guard the preservation of its purity and dogmas and would keep the regular bodies (the seculars and the clergy). "In the constitution called Apantzingan," issued in 1814 by the Sovereign Congress of the Insurgents and subscribed by the priest *Morelos* and other prominent men of the Independence period, the Catholic religion was acknowledged and recognized as the only one to be practised in the nation; foreigners who did not profess the Catholic religion were not permitted to become citizens, and it was resolved that citizenship was forfeited by the *crimes* of apostasy and heresy; travellers, in order to enjoy the protection of the law on their persons and properties were bound to respect Catholicism; free speech and *thought* was forbidden in what referred to attacks on the *Dogma,* and an ordinance was set for the opening and closing of the polls by the celebration of masses to the *Holy Spirit* and for Tedeums; it was ordered that all ecclesiastical judges be maintained in their respective offices; and finally it was ordered that all members of the Supreme Government, before taking the oath relative to their resolve to maintain the constitution and the cause of Independence, should be sworn to *defend even at the cost of their blood, the Catholic Apostolic Roman religion.* The first

article of the Plan de Iguala, which assured the triumph of the insurgents, also established religious intolerance in favor of Catholicism, expressly declaring, in case any one dared doubt it, that the clergy, both regular and secular, would be maintained in the possession of its properties and *privileges.* Lastly, the same fierce intolerance was stamped in the Republican Constitution of 1824, and in the Constitutional Bases and Laws issued in the years 1835 and 1836. The Bases, indeed, state that the Mexican Nation would profess or protect no other religion but the Catholic, Apostolic Roman religion, nor would it permit the profession of any other. And the Constitution of the year '36, when enumerating the obligations of Nationals, mentions in the first place, that of "professing the religion of his country," and expressly preserved ecclesiastic privileges.

During several years, counting from the fall of the ephemere empire of *Agustin de Iturbide,* one of the most attractive and troublesome figures in our history, and doubtless the most difficult on which to pass judgment, Mexico was merely a wide field for sterile political struggles aggravated by the several attempts which Spain made to reconquer her lost possessions. The clergy took advantage of this situation in order to develop its resources and extend its influence. Its brazenness reached such extremes that a certain priest applied to the government for authorization which was denied him—to have recourse to *whipping* in order to compel his parishioners to obey and serve him!

But the good seed which the North-American and the French revolutions had planted in the conscience of people had begun to sprout. The Mexican Liberal Party, which was the work of chosen spirits who desired to obtain the development of new ideals for their country began to crystallize, slowly but surely. It became understood that the real obstacle for the progress and development of the Nation and the education of the peoples was to be found in the reactionary party, the one constituted of the clergy and the so-called aristocracy; and the struggle between the the retrogrades and the men who aspired to secure greatness for their country began in earnest and the country was divided into two camps: the reactionaries—at the beginning opposed to emancipation, then imperialists with Iturbide, afterwards centralists, the same who later supported dictatorship with Santa-Anna—always clericals and natural protectors of the clergy; and the liberal party, which wanted to establish a Federal Republic similar to the North-American one, to spread education among the people, to give it ample political and social liberty, and diminish the power of the Church by depriving it of its privileges and forbidding its participation.

No true Mexican is desirous of remembering the extremes of empoverishment and degradation reached by the country under Antonio Lopez de Santa-Anna the most hateful of tyrants, a tragic clown who in his speeches and manifestos compared himself to Cincinnatus and Washington while he called himself "Alteza Serenisima" and plunged a knife into the breast of the mother-country. None of us desires to bring to mind the fact that the vanity, ambition, cupidity and fanaticism of this fatidic man, the powerful chief of the reactionaries, was the cause, first of the rebellion in Texas, and then of the unjust and unequal war with the United States by which Mexico lost almost one half of its territory.

This terrible disaster occasioned by the dictatorship and the clergy, opened many eyes, until then closed, and necessarily caused the downfall of Santa-Anna and the loss of prestige of his perverse politics. The revolution started. Sword in hand, the liberal party succeeded in taking possession of the power, and the bitter and bloody struggle against clericalism began with the dispossession of property and the issuance of the celebrated Constitution of '57, copied from the American constitution, and by means of which the Federal Republic was instituted, consecrating freedom of thought, of press, of work and of instruction; proclaiming all the other rights of man, suppressing privileges, declaring all men equal before the law, and repressing the ambition and rapacity of the clergy by the declaration that ecclesiastical corporations are incapable to administer or acquire real estate, except those buildings directly and immediately destined to the service and object of their institutions.

The reactionary party turned against these laws furiously and at the cry of *"religion y fueros"* (religion and privileges) began the terrible civil struggle called Reform War, which for years steeped the soil of the republic in blood and almost caused the loss of the Mexican nationality. The clericals, overcome on the battlefield, did not hesitate to search Europe for a scepter to hold sway over the catholic empire they had planned to establish in Mexico. All the world knows how that incomparable and glorious epoch ended, in which the liberal party and the genius of Juarez saved the mother country against the united efforts of the Mexican traitors and the troops of Napoleon the Small.

During this struggle, *Juarez, Ocampo* and the brothers *Lerdo de Tejada* dealt to clericalism the tremendous blows which were embodied in the laws which are known in Mexican history under the significant name of *Laws of Reform;* the separation of the Church and the State was decreed, as well as the nationalization of the clerical property; that is to say, it was ordered that all the property owned in the republic by the regular and secular clergy, reverted to the

nation; all religious orders were suppressed and the erection or institution of new convents was forbidden; a law was decreed relative to the civil status of persons, depriving the Church of the faculty it had usurped, of carrying the registers of births, marriages and death, since this work evidently belonged to the State. All intervention of the Church ceased in the cemeteries and churchyards, where burial was often denied to those who had fought against the abuses of the clergy; one specific case was when this denial was applied to the bodies of the men who had signed the Constitution of 1857. The liens between the national and pontifical governments were broken; it was settled that marriage was only a civil contract and that only the unions performed according to law and before those officials specially designed for it by the republic, would be valid before the law and create legal rights and obligations; religious holidays ceased to be national or state holidays; and an ordinance was adopted forbidding the civil authorities as such and the troops in formation, to attend temples or religious ceremonies; freedom of cults was proclaimed; the authority of religion and of priests was declared to be merely spiritual and that in the civil order there could be no obligation, no coercion or penalties for acts, misdemeanors or crimes of a purely religious order. Warning was given that bulls, rescripts, pastoral letters, sermons, etc., on no account would be tolerated; no attack against order or peace, morality, private life or the rights of a third party would be tolerated on any account in any clerical decree, bulls, rescripts, pastoral letters, sermons, etc. The right of enforcement was denied to the Church and also the right to give refuge within temples. It was also declared that oath and its retraction were not of the incumbence of the law nor could have any legal effect; and oath was substituted with the promise to tell the truth and comply with the law; it was ordered that religious acts be confined to the interior of churches and that outside of them the priests were not authorized to wear special clothes nor any distinctive signs of their ministry. It was no longer permitted that spiritual directors be appointed heirs; neither was it permitted to collect alms for religious objects unless duly authorized by the civil authorities, and with the understanding that contributions should always be voluntary and not extorted by coercion. All special treatment of priests and religious corporations was suppressed; the ringing of bells was regulated by the police; hospitals and beneficence houses were placed under civil authority instead of allowing the clergy to have absolute command of them; the nuns were ordered out of the convents and all women convents were definitely closed and all religious teaching as well as all religious ceremonies were banished

from official schools; all these decrees were, during the years 1873 and 1874, when *Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada* was president of the republic, the successor of Juarez—condensed into a law and sanctioned as supreme laws of the republic by the Congress of the Union, and it was added in them that the churches would be under the direct control of the Nation which would permit the priests to make use of them, but this, only until such time as the government should see fit to decree the final consolidation of the property.

But the task of the great Mexican liberals was too gigantic to be consummated in one generation.

It was an attack against ignorance and secular fanaticism of a whole nation, and against a power which for centuries had absolutely dominated the country, a power which is still alive; for although the Constitution of '57 and the Laws of Reform signified terrible blows against the monster who reacted, they were not sufficient to overturn it, much less to annihilate it.

The very spirit of liberalism which animated these laws was their worst enemy, for although they deprived the Church of official power and placed serious difficulties of form in the way of the Church, still, they allowed it, under constitutional guaranties, to pursue its somber labor of obscurantism and retrogradation.

However, if the Laws of Reform had been issued for an educated, cultured people, one respecting the law, conscious of its rights and acts; or if at least, the laws would have been applied strictly by honest authorities, zealous of fulfilling their duty, the slow work of years would have accustomed the people to such beautiful practices and would have insured for the Mexicans the realization of the glorious dreams of those high thinkers, who endowed their mother-country, more than fifty years ago, with a legislation which in a very incomplete manner, was recently copied by France, and which is still to be copied by other people such as Spain, Italy and the Central and South American republics which still moan under the heavy yoke of clericalism.

But history, which at all times and in all countries teaches us invariably that the best legislations when they are placed very high above the intellectual and moral level of the multitudes and does not care, either, to raise such a level, actively and strenuously, they stumble, when carried into practice, against insuperable difficulties. If nature does not go in jumps and leaps when it is a question of the physical evolution of beings, it does act so either when it is a question of the social or psychological evolution of peoples. Its work, its great work is carried on slowly in all fields,

line by line, step by step, drop by drop. The only thing which will resist the lash of the tempest and the weight of his ideas, is to follow the earth, weed it unceasingly, cultivate it carefully, and resign himself, without losing faith or enthusiasm, to wait until the small sprout becomes a plant and finally develops into a budding bush, and to entertain the hope that the latter will become a strong big tree which will resist the lash of the tempest and the weight of the centuries.

This is what should have been done in Mexico. For despite the declamations of newspapers and demagogues, so abundant in Spanish America, the Mexican people was not prepared to understand nor ready to take advantage of all those conquests which are almost at the summit of social evolution, in so far as can be observed from the depths of the dark valley in which we are still groping. It was necessary to prepare the people, to modify it, it was necessary to reiterate the new truths to it. It was necessary to guide each of its steps, lighting them incessantly with the light of reason; it was indispensable to drag it away with facts and not by mere words, from the claws of fanaticism and ignorance.

If a man's behavior would be considered absurd if he voluntarily exposed his young child to deathly perils claiming that he had instructed him fully and given him valuable and wise advice, in the same way it is absurd to expect the mass of the people to free itself of fanaticism while still being under the influence of the clergy, while the government of the republic merely disowned and despised that institution. It was impossible to close the eyes of the Mexican so that he would not see any idols, watch any soutans, read any clerical literature; it was impossible to plug his ears so that he would not hear any more sermons, salves, rogatives, bells; nor was it possible to stiffen his lips so that he place no more kisses on the feet of saints, or the dirty hands of sinners or on the contaminated ornaments of priests and images; no one could nail his legs so that he should not bend the knee before the so-called ministers of the Divine Power or the evil representations of the Supreme Being; no one could snatch his pocket-book to prevent him from delivering his money to priests. But it was possible to silence bells, burn books, stop sermons, place idols out of the sight and the lips of the Mexican, forbid that veneration of one man for another, prevent those undue worshippings, and those spoliations. Unhappily, that is not what was done. Outside of the principal centres (and not in all of them) where liberal agrupations existed ready to demand the fulfillment of the Reform Laws, the authorities did not exact compliance with them, and tolerated and consented to hundreds of daily transgressions on the part of

the clergy. Proof of this slackness may be had in the numerous and frequent circulars issued by the Federal Government, wherein, invoking patriotism, it requested and exhorted the State governors not to permit that the prize won at the cost of so much blood and suffering, be snatched from their hands and to have the Laws of Reform obeyed in full. Yes; the Federal Government had to make this request, for unfortunately, as it usually happens in the hour of triumph, many reactionaries, many traitors glided into the republican liberal ranks, and secured civil employment, and under *mental restriction,* protested the fulfillment of the laws of the Republic, while they were the first to disregard and violate them, in person and through their families.

When the gigantic work had just started, when the labor of reconstructing a country, ruined and devastated by sixty-six years of bloody struggle, sixty-six years during which the Independence War, the second war against Spain, the war with the United States, the war of Reform, the war against France and the Empire had succeeded each other, mixed with innumerable civil struggles; when the government toiled to solve the serious economic problems, as the inevitable corollary of such deep and lengthy perturbations, there appeared on the bloody stage of national politics the somber figure of the sinister man in whose hands the destiny of Mexico was nearly reversed, and who almost made useless the incessant and mortal struggle which had been carried on for almost two-thirds of a century: that man was Porfirio Diaz.

By his infidelities and by his treasons, he had impeded the great work of Juarez and embittered the last years of the noble old man; his ambition, his hypocrisy and his secret alliance with the men of the reactionary party caused the fall of Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, that eminent statician, worthy successor of the *Benemerito de las Americas,* the last representative of the great Mexican liberals, he who went to hide his shame and that of all his race, until he died, in the ample bosom of the free American nation.

Once porfirio Diaz became enthroned in power by means of violence and deceit, and thanks to the traditional "cuartelazo" which in Spanish American substituted the "por gracia de Dois" (by the grace of God) of the European monarchs, he knew how to keep himself in by means of the paid bayonets of a corrupted federal army, ready to draw in blood, as he often did, all start of protest, all attempt at liberation.

We are not going to make here the history or the criticism of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, for we would then be outside our subject, which is merely to point out through the history of Mexico, the work of the clerical party and

the motives for the serious campaign started against it by the Constitutionalism. We will say no more about the man who is now a corpse, the man who had his days of glory, who also shed his blood for liberty, but who was blinded by ambition and dared to place his own interest before that of the Mother-country. His long journey through our national history has at least served to show the capabilities of the Mexican people: how easily it adapts itself to civilization, how, even in the middle of the asphyxiating moral atmosphere in which it breathed, it developed material capabilites and faculties really surprising; how rapidly it became disciplined even under the dictatorship, and how easily it could have been led through the path of real progress and true freedom.

Diaz was well aware of the power of capital and of the clergy, and all his policy in order to perpetuate himself in power, aimed to obtain, first the sympathy, and afterwards the frank, decided, manifest co-operation of the clergy and the "aristocracy," the two reactionary elements in Mexico.

Despite all assertions to the contrary, he comes from the lowest ranks of the middle class, and by means of alliances, he became a member of the most opulent and reactionary families of the metropolis, and forgetting his countrymen, the indomitable Oaxaca Indians, at whose head he had gone to triumph, he employed years and years in trying to become an "aristocrat" to divine the secret of good manners, in the sumptuous functions, in the palatial homes of the richest families or in the beautiful halls of Chapultepec, or in the superb Hall of Embassadors or in the magnificent halls of the Jockey Club.

In the pursuit of an odious "caciquismo," with which he substituted the federal republican regime, proclaimed by a constitution which existed in name only, he reserved all the high posts for his adherents, the rich, fanatical Mexicans, and systematically and implacably drove from the administration all the middle class, the liberal class of Mexico which had contributed with the endeavour of its intelligence and with its blood to the restoration of the Republic; the class which invariably had marched at the front in all the enterprises of progress and liberty which have been enacted in Mexico.

Porfirio Diaz' work of conquest of the clergy was more rapid and easier because he was working on a class which has always been a faithful partisan of dicatorships; it was enough for him to begin what is known by the name of *Policy of Conciliation,* and which at the bottom was merely the violent revocation of almost all the Laws of Reform, all the measures conquered and sanctified by the blood of so many Mexicans, laws enacted in order to re-

strict the power of the clergy and to prevent any enterprise of a reactionary nature.

Traitors who, sword in hand, had supported the empire of Maximillian and the banner of Religion and Privileges, were called to the highest offices in the government of the Republic, either in the army, in the government of the States, the Congress and the Senate or in the diplomatic service, and even in the cabinet itself.

The Laws of Reform only lived the solitary life of files and libraries, and nobody wanted to remember when or why or wherefore or by whom they had been issued, unless it was to ask that they be revoked.

Despite the ordinances which prohibit the establishment of monastic orders in the Republic, the country again became ridden with monks' and nuns' convents, which under pretext of founding schools and establishing charity institutions, abounded in every city. On streets and squares one could see the black soutanos of the clergy; public processions and all kinds of religious ceremonies were held everywhere, especially in small cities, where more than anywhere else it would have been necessary to repress them.

The clergy took deliberate hold of instruction, not only the primary grades, but high and professional schools, while public government schools closed day by day or were poorly attended on account the scarcity of teachers due to the miserable salaries, and the want of books and other school material, or merely on account of the absence of pupils who were not compelled by the authorities to attend official schools; the clergy multiplied its schools, seminaries and colleges, spreading its pernicious doctrines everywhere, especially amongst the children of the higher classes, and counting among their pupils the children of the highest official authorities. In regard to the children of the mestizos and Indians, of whom the Church could expect nothing, it was convenient to maintain them in ignorance, therefore, schools were closed for them, or at best, they were instructed only in the catechism, in separate halls, where they entered through special doors, because on earth as in heaven, the clergy has thus understood equality and democracy.

In its text books, in the pulpit, in its publications, the clergy brazenly attacked, not only the ideas contrary to them, but also the liberal laws the revocation of which it demanded insistently, and even went so far as to insult and ridicule our national heroes, and denaturing or omitting historical facts in our history.

Supported and served by the servile advocates of the conciliating "cientifcismo," and counting upon the indifference, complacency and help of reactionary and venal

authorities and judges, the clericals distorted and misinterpreted laws and prohibitions, thus killing the spirit of the Reform.

By means of all kinds of subterfuges, and notwithstanding the prohibition imposed on religious corporations to possess and administer real estate or revenue capital, they began to monopolize a number of valuable rural and city properties, and large amounts of money which appeared to be the personal property of archbishops and bishops or fanatical wealthy individuals, the latter making a will in favor of the former; properties and capitals which by means of their parties, and with the complacent knowledge of the authorities, were leased or rented usuriously, or employed in shameful banking or bursatile combinations.

Temples, sanctuaries and oratories multiplied, and attached to the national churches, sumptuous chapels and magnificent residences were erected, many times paid for with public funds; the higher clergy living like princes, with carriages, automobiles and lackeys.

The authorities, from the President down boasted of the good terms on which they lived with the clergy, and the clergy boasted of its friendship with the authorities, and an interchange of calls was established between vestries and official palaces.

As if the diocesi already existant were not sufficient, new ones were created, thus ridding the republic with archbishops and bishops; and the number of brotherhoods, fraternities, congregations and religious societies, pious work boards, and other associations of which the clergy makes use to carry on its propaganda, were prodigiously increased.

Sensing a remote peril in the natives of the country, and following in this the past experience they had had, the Church excluded the Mexicans from seminaries and all ecclesiastical employments, offices and dignities. The greater majority of the alumni in the seminaries, was composed of boys brought from Spain to Mexico in order to "instruct or educate" them and convert them in some future day into princes of the *Mexican* church. All the clergy, high and low, with very few exceptions, (in which there were but few mestizos and Indians) was in the hands of the Spaniards, many of them absolutely illiterate, and whom public opinion pointed out as jail-birds, ex-grocers or ex-bullfighters, in one word, members of the pestiferous clerical rabble which the catholic Spain itself had driven from its soil.

The bishops called and gave hearty welcome to friars and priests expelled not only from Spain but also from

France, who under the name of Marists and other suspicious names swarmed into Mexico, the new land of promise, wherein they could idle in luxury and steal under the name of religion, and in that name also corrupt men, women and children.

The numerous crimes of the soutane people went unpunished; for while in the United States it is easy to send to the electric chair any reverend who is a criminal, in the History of Mexico no case is registered wherein a priest has been condemned even to life imprisonment. When and wherever they pleased they could kill, steal and abuse. If the misdemeanor was of small importance or executed *in azima vili,* the matter was forgotten; but if it was an enormous crime either in its nature or on account of the victim, then the criminal was sent out of the diocesis or out of the national territory, in accordance with the authorities and with money which sometimes the parishioners themselves, occasionally even the offended parties themselves, furnished, in order that the good name of the Church should not suffer.

The tithes were re-established in fact, by means of direct petitions which under the pretext of pious works to be made were addressed in writing to rich individuals, or by means of almoners who went from house to house, asking financial help for the reconstruction of such and such a temple, or for this or that novain; and those who refused were ostracized.

Under pretext of exerting the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, which they never respected, the reactionaries employed the authorities for preventing, forbidding, dissolving and punishing officially any campaign, any propaganda, any manifestation, any writing against clericalism; while they, in their large diaries, of which they had also taken possession, printed insults, attacks against the "enemies of the faith," and defamed and publicly calumniated the liberals, attacking them in their honor, and asking that bread and salt be denied to them, which really occurred, for to express anti-catholic ideas was enough to be placed outside of society. The non-catholic professionals starved, deprived of clients and help. Those who had the courage of not having baptism administered to their children or of omitting the religious ceremony of marriage, were looked upon with public contempt, considered as if they lived in concubinage and condemned to perpetual isolation.

The clergy ratified its hateful pact with the large landholders, successors in spirit if not in race, of the heartless "encomenderos" of the time of the conquest, in order to rivet the chains which held the people and continue holding it in slavery, which, in spite of anything stated to the

contrary, existed in fact in Yucatan in an open and disgusting manner. In the chapels installed in the farms and ranches, there took place periodical celebrations of masses and other ceremonies, liberally paid for, by the owners, with the object of "catequizar" the Indians, who were threatened with eternal torments if they disobeyed their owners or tried to leave the farms, an act of impossible accomplishment, since the authorities, by means of public troops undertook to pursue and even hunt as beasts the unhappy beings who tried to shake the yoke, and who when caught were thrown into inquisitorial cells, in stocks, after having been whipped barbarously; a custom which was common in Yucatan, until about the end of the year 1914.

With the complacency of the government, the clericals gave a final blow to the mother-country, and before the whole world condemned the work of the Republic in Mexico, erecting on the historical hill of "Las Campanas," on the same site where the Nation, in 1867, had executed those who had attempted to murder her, the chapel called the Expiation to make amends to the *Lord* for the offense against him made by republican soldiers when they marched against the clergy and against the empire of Maximillian; a chapel which, we understand, is still waiting to be demolished by the constitutionalist pick.

The clericals made idleness the national Mexican custom, promoting the renewal of the old practice of having civil holidays at the same time as the religious ones. These were distributed in such way that all cities, boroughs, towns, villages, farms, etc., in each state, celebrated them, either simultaneously or in turn, so that the holidays extended through the whole year, and there were fairs and other celebrations with the inevitable drunkenness, bullfights and other barbarous amusements. During these festivities, each association or group of workingmen, laborers, artisans, merchants, farmers, students and professionals (where there were any) and even women, had charge of a separate day, covering all the expenses incurred in such festivals, and in which the Church expenses were of course included. During these days, the populace, half drunk (for the clergy, for obvious reasons never fought drunkenness in the lower classes) rushed to the churches to pay for salves, rosaries, prayers and masses, to offer lighted wax candles which had been blessed by the priests (these candles were extinguished shortly after being offered, melted and sold again) to present and hang at the altars of saints or from their clothes, small human or animal figures, limbs, etc., made of gold or silver, but more usually of wax or paraffine; these offerings were sold by the priests at the doors of the churches. The parishioners knelt to kiss the feet, hands or vestments of the images which on these oc-

casions were taken down from the altars and set on brancards so that they were within reach of the lips of the people.

In one word, after four hundred years, other men, belonging to the same race of grasping adventurers, who under Cortez conquered the Aztec land, attempted to re-establish in Mexico the same social regime in favor during the viceroys, the same which is still dominant in many sections of Spain. In this task they had the support of the reactionary Mexicans whose great weakness, (whatever their color) has been to try to pass themselves as Spaniards or sons of Spaniards; and who in conversations, books, speeches, etc., always call the Spaniards (to the great amusement of the latter) their *Forefathers* and claim as their own, the glories of the Latin race which exist only in their excited imaginations.

When the reactionaries really considered themselves strong, when their preponderance was absolute, when the remnants of the liberal party were scattered, some in the more remote corners of the republic, others in exile in foreign lands; when the apostolic representative of the Roman Pope formally treating with the federal government for the re-establishment of official relations with the catholic pontiff, the reactionaries threw down the mask, and in the light of the sun, the sun which had shone on the bloody battlefields on Calpopalpam, Puebla and Querstaro, they organized the *Catholic National Party,* with the firm and express purpose of taking hold of the government which was already falling from the trembling hands of the dictator.

It was then that the dominant national conscience was awakened by the call of ingenious apostle *Francisco I. Madero,* who had been appointed by destiny to immolate himself on the altar of democracy and to undertake the work which in Mexico was considered absurd and impossible: the overthrowing of the porfirist rule. We say the overthrowing of the porfirist rule because the object was not to oust the dictator who was already within grasp of death's hands, but to put an end to a whole political system enthroned in the nation and deeply rooted for over one third of a century.

But if Madero was an apostle of democracy, he was not a politician nor a statesman, nor a true revolutionary: he was an awakener of consciences, but not a leader of men. He believed that Mexico lacked only justice and liberty, when it had an excess of slaves and of tormentors without the crushing of which it was impossible to establish a democracy. He imagined that a people of serfs, analphabets and fanatics could, by the mere *fiat* of an illumined one,

turn into a nation, strong, just, democratic, progressive and above all, free; without remembering that freedom and its corollaries are not the work of a law or the will of one man, but the slow and bloody conquest of a convinced people.

He thought of destroying the nefarious work of the reaction without attacking or punishing its authors; and believing that words of concord could replace bullets and that embraces could substitute guillotines and scaffolds, he invited with candid amnesities and ample pardons, all Mexicans to a union, a conciliation absolutely impossible and absurd.

He forgot the end of Juarez and of Lerdo de Tejada, and granted absolute, supreme liberties of which the people could not avail itself, since it was an abject, ignorant people, but which were favorable to the pharisees, the traitors, the reactionaries who in newspapers and tribunes condemned, insulted, ridiculed him and his own, impeding his work under pretense of exerting the constitutional franchises which they had never before respected.

Madero's generous and magnanimous spirit, was also credulous and weak, and he had all the sweetness, all the sincerity of a missionary of peace and love, ready to pardon, predestined to sacrifice; he did not have the iron, implacable hand, the steel will, the granite energy of the leader who wishes to remodel the soul and the brains of a race.

He imagined that by virtue of a speech, a vile slave could be converted into a conscious man; that the oppressors of a nation could become magnanimous Maecenas, and the ferocious praetorians of porfirism could be turned into loyal mandataries and defenders of the honor, peace and liberty of the republic.

His vain dream of finding at once a mother-country immediately great, free and happy, made him lose all caution, all political wariness, despite the advices and warnings of his partisans, and he not only admitted within the administration those who a few months before had been pointing him out as a dangerous visionary, but he permitted that militarism, the clergy and the plutocracy remain in their strong and inexpugnable positions.

He who could not conceive treason, and fell shortly after under the blows of Judases, in the midst of what appeared to be the signal, irremediable failure of all the democratic program in Mexico; in the midst of what appeared as the most brilliant justification of the brutal porfirist dictatorship.

But the men who accepted his legacy, the men who again raised the standard of revolution, who believed in the possibility of a resurrection of the mother-country, and did

not hesitate to march to reconquer liberty, at whatever cost, these men will not commit the same blunders which the Apostle incurred, and shall know how to profit by the cruel lessons of their hard experience.

Madero's failure, as all political failures, presents, indeed, a very valuable lesson, because it shows which path *must not* be followed.

Even Huerta's reactionary movement offers a precious teaching, because it makes evident which is the enemy, which continues being the enemy of liberty and progress in Mexico, who should be crushed forever, if we desire that the mother-country be placed on the straight path, and to progress along the lines of peace, democracy, justice and right.

That failure and this reaction warn us unmistakably that, despite what Madero believed, the Mexican people was not in a condition to enter fully into the modern democratic life, because it is impossible to come, in a few hours, from the darkness of slavery into the meridian light of the sun of freedom; and that it was and is indispensable to raise the obstacles which prevented the advance and to tear from the eyes of the people the thick bandage of lies, fanaticism and ignorance which blinded and still blinds it. In other words, and as it has always been recognized by the philosophy of history, it was and is necessary to prepare the people to accept the laws, and not to be satisfied with reproducing in the country, excellent codes made for other men, other civilizations, other conditions.

The sagacity of the chiefs of the Constitutionalist movement has thus understood it, and for that reason they established the *preconstitutional periods,* that is to say, the indefinite period of adaptation and moulding which will last in Mexico until the people are in conditions which permit the practice of political and social conquests which have made other nations great and happy, a state which the Mexican people has desired to secure, in their long expectation and work for liberty.

Unhappily, the liberty of the people is not the graceful and ephemeral flower which one gathers in the pleasant corner of a delightful meadow crossed by milk and honey streams, amidst dances and music; it is the eternal and dangerous fire of Prometheus, which one must win on top of the steep mountain, under the sweep of the hurricane, under the lightning, amidst ruin and desolation, stepping over corpses of brothers, crossing precipices, and rivers of blood.

And because the Mexican revolution is conscious of the tears and the blood which is the price which the Republic has paid, and of the devastation caused, it understands that

it must justify such devastation, and such shedding of tears and blood before the mother-country and the whole world.

And the only justification possible, the only reason acceptable, is; not the conquering, but the definite annihilation of the reaction; the real, assured, confirmed death of clericalism and plutocracy, names which in Mexico, and as in Mexico also throughout the world, mean *reaction.*

The reactionary party in Mexico must, therefore, abandon *all hope* of any possible conciliation with the triumphant constitutionalism, because there is no pardon possible for it, because it will never be re-installed in its old strongholds, because neither under the pretext of the freedom of cult, of speech, and of teaching proclaimed by the Constitution of '57, nor under the pretext of amnesty, nor under any other pretext whatever, will the reaction be installed in the exercise of its so-called rights, which are merely the means of which it avails itself to control the people of Mexico through religious fanaticism, and which permit it to be a constant threat for all republican institutions and for the peace of the country, as well as an almost impassable obstacle to the nation's development and progress.

The Federal Constitution of 1857 will not again be in force until the exercise of those liberties can be ruled in a more efficacious way; and if, in order to attain this object it is necessary to reform and modify it, the Revolution will not hesitate to undertake and accomplish this work.

For it is necessary to complete the holy and gigantic undertaking of our forefathers, the immense labor of freedom begun by *Juarez, Ocampo,* and *Lerdo de Tejada.*

Because the clergy will no longer be permitted to maintain the low people in ignorance and idolatry; nor to win over the children of the middle and upper classes, at schools, colleges and seminaries, thus preparing generations of traitors, of enemies of liberty, progress and the Republic, masses of slaves of the Catholic dogma and serfs of the Roman curia.

They will not be allowed to control woman, fomenting her superstitution, developing habits of laziness and isolation as in the Middle Ages and keeping her subject to fanaticism and backwardness, by means of incessant religious practices carried on day and night in churches and sanctuaries, oratories, and convents, and in the fraternities, associations and other societies wherein feminine vanity is fanned and flattered making women believe that they are servants, daughters and even sisters of each and every personification of catholicism.

They will not be permitted to exert their ministry unless they are previously married, which is the only means to

prevent their being a constant real and formidable menace to the tranquility, harmony and purity of homes.

They shall not be permitted to deceive and dominate the low classes, especially women, and distort all moral ideas by means of the confessional, which is nothing but a window open on every home and every conscience; nor will they be permitted to make any one believe they can absolve, and that by virtue of a power and in the exercise of a ministry which they have received from the Divinity, that they can wash and nullify merely by learning of them all sins, all crimes, even the most abominable, and excuse and tolerate the most absolute violations of the moral and written laws.

They shall not exploit the people in the future by means of their interminable religious and profane festivities, or by nevaines, processions, rogatives and masses subject to a tariff. Nor shall they continue selling spiritual and temporal grace, pardons, indulgences and the heaven.

They shall not maintain in the future the idolatry of the people, making it kneel before dirty pictures representing men, women and animals, which usurp the name and the idea of the Supreme Being, and distort, equivocate and prevent all high moral conception of the world system and of the destiny of man on earth.

They shall not make believe that the rain on the fields, the light of the sky, the good crops, the realization of purposes, the result of business and enterprises, the satisfaction of desires, epidemics, floods, earthquakes and other calamities, health of persons and of animals, the securing of lovers, the luck of marriages, the sterility in women and impotency in men, depend, not on human effort or well directed will, or natural causes, common to all times, to all countries, races and beings, but on the vain caprice of mysterious and absurd trinities, the changeable will of christs, virgins and saints, whose favor can be purchased by means of offerings, donations and alms to the Church, or by prayers, paid for, offered specially by priests.

They shall not be permitted to publish under the title of educative works, books and pamphlets in which they attack and outrage the memory of national heroes, the institutions of the republic, in which they disown and deny the conquests of science and experience, in which the triumphs of sociology and modern psychology are condemned, in which they place the object of human life outside of life itself, in which they counsel hate to beauty, to matter and to sexual love, and the poor and the oppressed are exhorted to persevere in it, and to become resigned to their poverty and their slavery, to live and desire it. And they shall not be permitted in their papers, circulars, pas-

toral letters and sermons, to attack all reputations, deride all virtue, when these merits, virtues and reputations are those of individuals who are not with them, or who combat them.

They shall not be able to continue enriching themselves with the censurable trade in relics, images, scapularies, saints, votive offerings, medals, crosses and waters, and blessed candles, to the evident detriment of the true spiritual welfare and especially the temporal welfare of their adepts.

They shall no longer attempt against public health by means of their dirty fountains of blessed water, their chants over corpses, their vigils, their large gatherings within half closed temples; nor shall they continue contributing to the empoverishment and degeneration of the race for the direct advantage of the *masters* and in flagrant violation of the law, granting to Indians and miserable dependents special permit to work on Sundays, and forcing them to imbecile fasts and abstinences, under the pretext that eating certain food on certain days is an offense and a sin against the Lord.

They shall not be allowed to build and open their churches, their chapels and sanctuaries to pursue thereby their work of exploitation, retrocess and lies, nor will they be permitted to found or maintain beneficent associations, or institutions, wherein, forgetting that Christian charity must be still blinder than justice, they demand that the sick one, the needy, the orphan, in order to get help, must show himself a Catholic, Apostolic Roman.

They shall not be permitted to place collection boxes in churches, nor demand, directly or indirectly, contributions, offerings or alms; nor adorn their temples, and images with precious metals and stones, not even with the excuse that the donations are expontaneous offerings from the people.

They shall not continue living in sumptuous palaces belonging to the Nation, under the pretext that these palaces were dependencies of the churches; nor will they be permitted to monopolize earthly goods, they whose kingdom is not of this earth.

Finally, it will no longer be tolerated that within the national organization there exist another organization constituted of foreigners and depending from the Roman Pontiff, for in the Republic, in order to practice as a catholic priest, it will be necessary to be of Mexican birth, to promise, under severe penalties, to comply strictly with our laws and to obey our authorities, besides possessing other requisites of instruction, morality and any others required by the corresponding by-laws.

By no means whatever will they be permitted to belong, directly or indirectly, individually or collectively, by word or by writing, to boards, brotherhoods, corporations, societies or parties which may even remotely, have a political object.

Because all that, which, in accordance with what has been said before, must be forbidden, is what constitutes the wicked, perverse, criminal work of the catholic clergy, and *should be destroyed.*

As we stated at the beginning of this work, unless the Americans take the Mexican standpoint, they are unable to understand and to judge the work of clericalism in Mexico, and the reason of the prosecution begun against it.

As we said before, the people of the United States, the immense majority of which is formed by individuals educated in the protestant religion, economical, simple, liberal, and based on the free examen, cannot even conceive to what extent the catholic fanaticism in a country almost absolutely analphabet as is Mexico and populated by individuals whose moral and religious conceptions remain on the same level they had at the time of the conquest, imply an obstacle to all purpose of real civilization and progress.

Protestant Americans cannot understand all the abomination enclosed within Mexican catholicism, since they have no priests from Rome who believe themselves superior to the other mortals, nor have they the idolatric practices and the so-called sacraments, especially that of confession, which is only an instrument to penetrate into the homes and the consciences and rule over them.

Neither can it be understood, by the educated members of the catholic part of the United States. Because there is an abyss of centuries and races between their cultured, discreet, moderate catholicism, modified and modernized, if we may call it so, and the catholic idolatry, of the Mexican masses, mediaeval and savage taught, propagated and applied by Spanish priests, exactly similar in intellect and in morality to those who, with the cross in one hand and the sword in the other, accompanied the ferocious conquerors of Anahuac; those who destroyed, breaking and burning, even the slightest vestiges of the aboriginal civilizations, those who preached christianism while discussing if the Indian had a soul or not; those who to the sacrifical stone of the Aztecs, whereon the victim's breast was opened to extract the heart and offer it to their sanguinary deities, substituted the frightful fires of the Inquisition wherein, in the name of a God of mercy and love, they slowly burned the trembling flesh of the heretics.

The great figures of Cardinal *Gibbons* and Archbishop *Ireland* the illustrious pre-catholic American prelates, who

have started democratic campaigns in favor of the workingmen and the oppressed, with their modernist tendencies, with their vain attempts to conciliate catholic religion with the conquests of civilization and Science, attempts wherein they have not hesitated to stand firm against the papal power, have no counterpart, and can have no counterpart in Mexico. To these great men who vainly search an opening on the iron walls of the catholic dogmatism, the Mexican clergy can only compare the miserable figure of the traitor Labastida, archbishop of Mexico, who went abroad to beg for a foreign scepter to come and rule over Mexico, the repugnant personality of the notorious Plancarte, scandalously stealing the treasures of Sanctuary of Guadeloupe, the mean profiles of the Spanish priests of contemporaneous Mexico, ignorant, fanatical, ambitious, loafers and thieves, who on hearing of the triumphs of the Constitutionalism, fled carrying, not their miraculous images of clay and papier mache, which they left in the churches at the mercy of the enemy, but the rich jewels, the gold and silver, the dazzling gems with which the stupidity of a whole country had adorned the idols; jewels which were converted into dollars and have assured their possessors a life of ease and comfort in foreign countries.

The Constitutionalism, which has been exposed before the American people as being atheist and the systematic enemy of all religious idea, shows, therefore, that it only attacks the catholic clergy in Mexico, and that after so many lessons during more than a century of bloody fights, the latter will not be permitted to take refuge under the laws of the republic in order to attack it with safety.

The revolution does not oppose the religious idea; good proof of this is that no complaints have been made by the protestant clergy and parishioners, which, although in a reduced number, exist in the Republic. Furthermore, the liberals of Mexico would be pleased to see that the directing centers of American protestantism would send good and numerous missionaries which no doubt would help to defanatize the people. No doubt they could count on the moral and material help of the Government which would let them use, free of rent, many of the temples which to date have been used by the catholics.

However it may be, the American public should not admit the interested and foul attacks which the reactionary party incessantly directs against the Constitutionalism, by reason of the religious question.

The descendants of the European people which four centuries ago, from Martin Luther and the king of England and the German Princes, opposed the power of the Catholic Church and knew how to vanquish it, upsetting

the enormous barrier of fanaticism and ignorance, tyranny and cruelty which obstructed the path of progress, and making possible the birth of the modern spirit and the formation of the vigorous and liberal people of the North of Europe, which since then have been the type and model of civilization for the whole world, *cannot and must not,* unless they are inconsequent with their own doctrines and ideals, condemn, but on the contrary, approve, help and favor the Mexican liberal intellectuality, fighting at the present time, the last fight, the decisive battle against the power of clericalism, and which wishes for its country the same advantage and possibilities of progress which so many years ago were achieved by their European friends, and which the latter legated to their children the North Americans of today.

They should consider the case of Mexico in what relates to the religious campaign, as a simple isolated episode in the history of the terrible struggle between liberalism and catholic dogmatism.

They should bear in mind that sooner or later, the same convulsions will shake the people in America and in Europe which still are under the rule of papism.

They must remember that the people and the press of the United States, who some years ago applauded the gigantic labor cleansing which, despite the protests of a great part of the people, was undertaken by the Government of the noble and cultured France in order to separate the Church from the State, to put an end to religious associations, to inventory as property of the nation, the property of the clergy, to put an end to the ignominious abuses of the catholic and liberalist parties, *cannot and must not,* without a shameless revolt forcing them, condemn the same undertaking when and because it is Mexico that is in question, despite the fact that in our Spanish-American people, the dominion and the despotism of the clergy reached a height never paralleled in history.

They should take into account that they themselves would be staggering under the weight of such an atrocious curse, if instead of being colonized by the children of free and protestant England, and of having developed by the affluence of immigration of other protestant countries of Europe, they had had the misfortune of having been colonized by the fanatical Spaniards of the time of Charles V and Philip II, whose inheritance of ignorance and obscurantism is still alive in the so-called Latin countries of the American continent.

Finally, they should fear to become involved in similar struggles, if the development of catholicism continues, and if the latter finally succeeds in organizing its so-called

National Catholic Party, similar to that which caused the terrible war which is still being waged.

In his famous speech at Indianapolis, President Wilson recognized the right of the Mexican people to spill their blood for the conquest of their political and social liberties, which have cost so much to all countries on earth. But this recognition must also relate to the campaign now being waged with the object that the Mexicans may secure liberty of conscience, without which their triumphs on the social and political fields however brilliant, would be void and ephemeral.

Because the only man who is really free, is he who has succeeded in emancipating himself from the ominous yoke of dogma and tradition.

RODLOFO MENENDEZ MENA.

Merida, January, 1916.

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